

Win me and weare me, let him answere me,
Come follow me boy, come sir boy, come follow me
Sir boy, ile whip you from your foyning fence,
Nay, as I am a gentleman, I will.

Leon. Brother.

Bro. Content your self, God knows I lou'd my neece,
And she is dead, slander'd to death by villaines,
That dare as well answer a man indeede,
As I dare take a serpent by the tongue.
Boyes, apes, braggarts, lackes, milke-sops.

Leon. Brother Anthony.

Bro. Hold you content, what man? I know them, yea
And what they weigh, euen to the vtmost scruple,
Scambling, out-facing, fashion-monging boyes,
That lye, and cog, and flout, depraue, and slander,
Goe antiquely, and show outward hidiousnesse,
And speake of halfe a dozen dang'rous words,
How they might hurt their enemies, if they durst.
And this is all.

Leon. But brother Anthony.

Ant. Come, 'tis no matter,
Do not you meddle, let me deale in this.

Pri. Gentlemen both, we will not wake your patience
My heart is sorry for your daughters death:
But on my honour she was charg'd with nothing
But what was true, and very full of prooffe.

Leon. My Lord, my Lord.

Prin. I will not heare you.

Enter Benedicke.

Leo. No come brother, away, I will be heard.

Exeunt ambo.

Bro. And shall, or some of vs will smart for it.

Prin. See, see, here comes the man we went to seeke.

Clau. Now signior, what newes?

Ben. Good day my Lord.

Prin. Welcome signior, you are almost come to part
almost a fray.

Clau. Wee had likt to haue had our two noses snap
off with two old men without teeth.

Prin. Leonato and his brother, what think'st thou? had
wee fought, I doubt we should haue bene too yong for
them.

Ben. In a false quarrell there is no true valour, I came
to seeke you both.

Clau. We haue bene vp and downe to seeke thee, for
we are high prooffe melancholly, and would faine haue it
beaten away, wilt thou vse thy wit?

Ben. It is in my scabberd, shall I draw it?

Prin. Doeft thou weare thy wit by thy side?

Clau. Neuer any did so, though verie many haue been
beside their wit, I will bid thee drawe, as we do the min-
strels, draw to pleasure vs.

Prin. As I am an honest man he lookes pale, art thou
sicke, or angrie?

Clau. What, courage man: what though care kil'd a
cat, thou hast mettle enough in thee to kill care.

Ben. Sir, I shall meete your wit in the careere, and
you charge it against me, I pray you chuse another sub-
iect.

Clau. Nay then giue him another staffe, this last was
broke crosse.

Prin. By this light, he changes more and more, I thinke
he be angrie indeede.

Clau. If he be, he knowes how to turne his girdle.

Ben. Shall I speake a word in your care?

Clau. God blefse me from a challenge.

Ben. You are a villaine, I lef't not, I will make it good
how you dare, with what you dare, and when you dare,
do me right, or I will protest your cowardise: you haue
kill'd a sweete Ladie, and her death shall fall heauie on
you, let me heare from you.

Clau. Well, I will meete you, so I may haue good
cheare.

Prin. What, a feast, a feast?

Clau. I faith I thanke him, he hath bid me to a calues
head and a Capon, the which if I doe not carue most cu-
riously, say my knife's naught, shall I not finde a wood-
cocke too?

Ben. Sir, your wit ambles well, it goes easily.

Prin. Ile tell thee how Beatrice prais'd thy wit the o-
ther day: I said thou hadst a fine wit: true saies she, a fine
little one: no said I, a great wit: right saies shee, a great
grosse one: nay said I, a good wit: iust said she, it hurts
no body: nay said I, the gentleman is wise: certain said
she, a wise gentleman: nay said I, he hath the tongues:
that I beleue said shee, for hee swore a thing to me on
munday night, which he forswore on tuesday morning:
there's a double tongue, there's two tongues: thus did
shee an howre together trans-shape thy particular ver-
ities, yet at last she concluded with a sigh, thou wast the
proppert man in Italie.

Clau. For the which she wept heartily, and said shee
ear'd not.

Prin. Yea that she did, but yet for all that, and if shee
did not hate him deadlie, shee would loue him dearly,
the old mans daughter: told vs all.

Clau. All, all, and moreouer, God saw him vwhen he
was hid in the garden.

Prin. But when shall we set the sauage Bulls hornes
on the sensible Benedicks head?

Clau. Yea and text vnder-neath, heere dwells Bene-
dicke the married man.

Ben. Fare you well, Boy, you know my minde, I will
leau you now to your gossip-like humor, you breake
iests as braggards do their blades, which God be thank-
ed hurt not: my Lord, for your manie courtesies I thank
you, I must discontinue your companie, your brother
the Bastard is fled from Messina: you haue among you,
kill'd a sweet and innocent Ladie: for my Lord Lacke-
beard there, he and I shall meete, and till then peace be
with him.

Prin. He is in earnest.

Clau. In most profound earnest, and Ile warrant you,
for the loue of Beatrice.

Prin. And hath challeng'd thee.

Clau. Most sincerely.

Prin. What a prettie thing man is, when he goes in his
doubler and hofe, and leaues off his wit.

Enter Constable, Canrade, and Borachio.]

Clau. He is then a Giant to an Ape, but then is an Ape
a Doctor to such a man.

Prin. But soft you, let me be, plucke vp my heart, and
be sad, did he not say my brother was fled?

Const. Come you sir, if iustice cannot tame you, shee
shall nere weigh more reasons in her ballance, nay, and
you be a cursing hypocrite once, you must be lookt to.

Prin. How now, two of my brothers men bound? Bo-
rachio one.

Clau. Harken after their offence my Lord.

Prin. Officers, what offence haue these men done?

Con. Marrie

Const. Marrie sir, they haue committed false report,
moreouer they haue spoken vntruths, secondarily they
are slanderers, first and lastly, they haue belyed a Ladie,
thirdly, they haue verifed vnjust things, and to conclude
they are lying knaues.

Prin. First I aske thee, what they haue done, thirdlie
I aske thee vwhat's their offence, first and lastlie why they
are committed, and to conclude, what you lay to their
charge.

Clau. Rightlie reasoned, and in his owne diuision, and
by my troth there's one meaning vvell suited.

Prin. Who haue you offended masters, that you are
thus bound to your answer? this learned Constable is too
cunning to be vnderstood, vwhat's your offence?

Bor. Sweete Prince, let me go no farther to mine an-
swere: do you heare me, and let this Count, kill mee: I
haue deceiued euen your verie eies: vwhat your wise-
domes could not discouery, these shallow fooles haue
brought to light, vwho in the night ouerheard me con-
fessing to this man, how Don Iohn your brother incensed
me to slander the Ladie Hero, how you were brought
into the Orchard, and saw me court Margaret in Heroes
garments, how you disgrac'd her vwhen you should
marrie her: my villanie they haue vpon record, vwhich
I had rather seale vwith my death, then repeate ouer to
my shame: the Ladie is dead vpon mine and my masters
false accusation: and briefelie, I desire nothing but the
reward of a villaine.

Prin. Runs not this speech like yron through your
bloud?

Clau. I haue drunke poison whiles he vtter'd it.

Prin. But did my Brother set thee on to this?

Bor. Yea, and paid me richly for the practise of it.

Prin. He is compos'd and fram'd of treacherie,
And fled he is vpon this villanie.

Clau. Sweet Hero, now thy image doth appeare
In the rare semblance that I lou'd it first.

Const. Come, bring away the plaintiffes, by this time
our Sexton hath reformed Signior Leonato of the matter:
and masters, do not forget to specifie when time & place
shall serue, that I am an Ass.

Con. 2. Here, here comes master Signior Leonato, and
the Sexton too.

Enter Leonato.

Leon. Which is the villaine? let me see his eies,
That when I note another man like him,
I may auoide him: vwhich of these is he?

Bor. If you vwould know your wronger, looke on me.

Leon. Art thou thou the slave that with thy breath
hast killd mine innocent childe?

Bor. Yea, euen I alone.

Leon. No, not so villaine, thou beliefst thy selfe,

Here stand a paire of honourable men,

A third is fled that had a hand in it:

I thanke you Princes for my daughters death,

Record it with your high and worthie deedes,

'Twas bravely done, if you be thinke you of it.

Clau. I know not how to pray your patience,

Yet I must speake, choofe your reuenge your selfe,

Impose me to what penance your inuention

Can lay vpon my sinne, yet sinn'd I not

But in mistaking.

Prin. By my soule nor I,

And yet to satisfie this good old man,

I vwould bend vnder anie heauie vvaight,
That heele enioyne me to.

Leon. I cannot bid you bid my daughter liue,
That vvere impossible, but I praie you both,
Possesse the people in Messina here,
How innocent she died, and if your loue
Can labour aught in sad inuention,
Hang her an epitaph vpon her toomb,
And sing it to her bones, sing it to night:
To morrow morning come you to my house,
And since you could not be my sonne in law,
Be yet my Nephew: my brother hath a daughter,
Almost the copie of my childe that's dead,
And she alone is heire to both of vs,
Giue her the right you should haue giu'n her cofin,
And so dies my reuenge.

Clau. O noble sir!
Your ouerkindnesse doth wring teares from me,
I do embrace your offer, and dispose
For henceforth of poore Claudio.

Leon. To morrow then I will expect your comming,
To night I take my leaue, this naughtie man
Shall face to face be brought to Margaret,
Who I beleuee was packt in all this wrong,
Hired to it by your brother.

Bor. No by my soule she was not,
Nor knew not what she did when she spoke to me,
But alwaies hath bin iust and vertuous,
In anie thing that I do know by her.

Const. Moreouer sir, which indeede is not vnder white
and black, this plaintiffe here, the offendour did call mee
asse, I beseech you let it be remembred in his punish-
ment, and also the vwatch heard them talke of one De for-
med, they say he weares a key in his eare and a lock hang-
ing by it, and borrowes monie in Gods name, the which
he hath vs'd so long, and neuer paid, that now men grow
hard-hearted and will lend nothing for Gods sake: praie
you examine him vpon that point.

Leon. I thanke thee for thy care and honest paines.

Const. Your vvorship speaks like a most thankefull
and reuerend youth, and I praie God for you.

Leon. There's for thy paines.

Const. God saue the foundation.

Leon. Goe, I discharge thee of thy prisoner, and I
thanke thee.

Const. I leaue an arrant knaue vwith your vvorship,
which I beseech your worship to correct your selfe, for
the example of others: God keepe your vvorship, I
wish your worship vwell, God restore you to health,
I humbly giue you leaue to depart, and if a mer-
rie meeting may be wisht, God prohibite it: come
neighbour.

Leon. Vntill to morrow morning, Lords, farewell.

Exeunt.

Bro. Farewell my Lords, vve looke for you to mor-
row.

Prin. We will not faile.

Clau. To night ile mourne with Hero.

Leon. Bring you these fellowes on, weel talke vwith
Margaret, how her acquaintance grew vwith this lewd
fellow.

Exeunt.

Enter Benedicke and Margaret.

Ben. Praie thee sweete Mistis Margaret, deserue
well at my hands, by helping mee to the speech of Bea-
trice.

Mar. Will